



## TRANSCRIPT

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### *The Identity of the Beloved Disciple*

00:00:02 **Justin Holcomb:** I know the traditional understanding of the authorship is John the Apostle, and then there's others like Richard Bauckham who say it's John the Elder.

**D.A. Carson:** The reasons for appealing to John the Elder as a separate individual, in my view, are pretty weak.

**G.K. Beale.** I think it's very difficult. I would still say it's probably John the Apostle, but Richard Bauckham has made a very plausible argument that it's another John.

**Lydia McGrew:** You've got this possible reading that there are two different Johns, and then Bauckham kind of takes off with it from there.

00:00:35 **Narrator:** Five centuries ago, in taverns and public houses across Europe, the masses would gather for discussion and debate over the latest ideas sweeping the land. From one such meeting place, a small Cambridge inn called The White Horse, the Reformation came to the English-speaking world. Carrying on the tradition, welcome to The White Horse Inn.

00:01:00 **Shane Rosenthal:** Hello, and welcome to this special edition of the White Horse Inn. Over the past year, as you know, we've been walking verse by verse through the Gospel of John, and now that we've concluded our study, for the next few programs we'll be surveying some of the important themes and topics that this gospel addresses. One of the most important themes that we discussed throughout this year was the fact that the fourth gospel is presented as a kind of trial narrative, that is, it's a kind of—a written deposition that seeks to present a host of witnesses who end up testifying to all that Jesus said and did, with the goal that readers would come to see that this same Jesus was actually the Lord's Messiah, promised throughout the pages of the Old Testament. Now, of course, this claim is widely disputed in our day. If you watch a History Channel documentary or take a religious studies course at almost any college, more likely than not, you'll be told that John is actually the latest of the four gospels and that as such, it presents not history, but much later Christian beliefs and dogmas. But as we've seen in our study this year, that assertion itself turns out to be a dogma that's not supported by the evidence. Over and over again, we saw evidence that the person who wrote this text had accurate knowledge of the customs, beliefs, names and geographical features of early first century Jerusalem.

00:02:09 In other words, since the author of this text has shown himself to be trustworthy in matters that can be verified, we have good reason to trust him in other matters, as well. Back in the 1920s, Princeton New Testament scholar J. Gresham Machen observed that, too often, the conservative Bible believers of his day ended up ignoring important historical and intellectual questions relating to the Christian faith and instead, simply took for

granted the Bible's reliability as they focused on its practical application. The result of this, he argued, was that these believers ended up conceding the field to those with anti-supernatural biases who did wish to use their minds in the service of their religious and theological convictions, and as we survey our current situation almost 100 years later, it appears that Machen's fears were well-founded. Nearly all of our intellectual institutions have been taken over by those with liberal theological assumptions while conservative Christians, for the large part, still seem to be preoccupied with practical application. Those raised in churches of this kind, who were never given reasons for the hope within them, have too often become easy prey for advocates of secularism. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why, according to some stats, over 60 percent of those raised in evangelical homes stop attending church after their first year in college. Listen, for example, to what Brett Kunkle from *Stand to Reason* related to us on a White Horse Inn episode a few years back.

00:03:29 **Brett Kunkle:** You could say I was the model youth group kid—went through all the children's programs, memorized the scriptures, got the badges. I was that model kid that every youth pastor wanted in their churches and all of that training for 18 years did not equip me for my first semester in college.

00:03:48 **Shane Rosenthal:** Unfortunately, Brett's experience is not unique. Too often, what you're likely to hear at a typical church on any given Sunday morning is that Christianity is a kind of therapy that can help you get through life's ups and downs—rather than as a truth claim that should be proclaimed and defended. And yet, when you look through the sermons recorded in the book of Acts, again and again you'll find the apostles making claims, not about what Jesus can do for us today, but on what Jesus has done for us once and for all, and that what he did was witnessed in advance by the prophets and seen in space and time by actual eyewitnesses. As I mentioned earlier, this is a good way to read the Gospel of John, as well. But if we're to recover this way of reading and thinking about a text like the Fourth Gospel, then we need to begin to ask new questions. For example, if this really is a document written by a living eyewitness of Jesus, then one of the first questions we should ask is, "Who was this person?" Though many have assumed that the Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John, as we have seen in various places throughout this yearlong study, this is actually an open question, even among conservative scholars and thinkers. For example, listen to the following clips from interviews we aired earlier this year featuring Craig Blomberg, G. K. Beale, and Justin Holcomb. Professor Blomberg, what's your view of the authorship of this gospel? Do you believe that it was written by John the Apostle?

00:05:02 **Craig Blomberg:** I think that is still probably the most likely case. There is some uncertainty in some of the early church tradition, not about the name of the author but about whether there was an elder John, perhaps a disciple, a second generation follower of John the Apostle—but that evidence isn't all that strong, and I see no reason to contradict the early church short of having compelling evidence otherwise.

00:05:31 **G. K. Beale:** I think it's very difficult. I would still say it's probably John the Apostle, but Richard Bauckham has made a very plausible argument that it's another John.

00:05:40 **Justin Holcomb:** I know the traditional understanding of the authorship is John the Apostle, and then there's others like Richard Bauckham who say John the Elder, and I am open to the argument. Basically, my view of authorship sways depending on who I read last, and not knowing exactly who the author is doesn't undo anything for me, so I'm actually really flexible.

00:06:04 **Shane Rosenthal:** Now in those clips, G. K. Beale and Justin Holcomb both refer to the work of Cambridge scholar Richard Bauckham, who in recent years has become a strong advocate for the position that the Gospel of John was likely written by a lesser known disciple of Jesus by the name of John the Elder. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to talk with Professor Bauckham about his views of the Fourth Gospel and though parts of his exchange were made available on a previous episode, much of the material we discussed relating to the authorship question has not yet aired. So, here's that discussion.

00:06:34 **Richard Bauckham:** Something you might not notice unless you're reading quite carefully, when Jesus calls the first disciples at the end of Chapter 1, these people who had been disciples of John the Baptist witnessed John the Baptist pointing out who Jesus is and they're interested, and they follow Jesus and then they bring their friends along, too. But these two original disciples are Andrew and another disciple who is not known, and then Andrew fetches his brother, Peter, and they meet Philip and meet Nathaniel, and then the unnamed disciples who dropped out of the picture. If you're not attending you might just not just notice he's there, you'll not notice that he's disappeared. But it is very old fact, if you notice it, that here you have one of the very first disciples of Jesus who is not named, and I think the first time reader of the gospel would not really know what to make of that. But by the time you get to the end of the gospel and you're not used to this, to go to who is called the disciple Jesus loved and is always anonymous, you couldn't read something you think that maybe this disciple, there right at the beginning, is that disciple. And, of course, when Jesus first meets him, he cannot be called the disciple Jesus loved. Jesus hasn't had a chance to love him yet. So, he is sort of standard title later in gospel cannot be used at the beginning. So, I think he appears there right at the beginning, and there's a verse here in the Last Supper discourse of Jesus, where he refers to his disciples as witnesses and he says, "*You are my witnesses because you have been with me from the beginning.*" Now, the loving disciple makes a big thing of his own witness to Jesus. It would be rather odd if he has Jesus saying that and he could not—as he would include himself in those disciples who had been there from the beginning. So, I think there's a good of saying that that disciple who's anonymous at the beginning is, in fact, the beloved disciple.

00:08:26 **Shane Rosenthal:** Yeah. It wouldn't make sense at all if he, kind of, appears there at the Last Supper and proclaims this witness material, including that verse in John 15 saying, "*The witnesses should be those who go back from the beginning.*" If he's only appearing there at the Last Supper for the first time, that doesn't make a lot of sense.

00:08:41 **Richard Bauckham:** It doesn't make a lot of sense at all. No. And so, it puts it in there just before Peter—this disciple literally, probably a few hours before Peter was, but interestingly, that pattern is replicated in the epilogue the other way around, so that in

epilogue you've got Jesus with Peter and their beloved disciple. The beloved disciple, you know, remains in the narrative, but just a fraction of time after Peter, at the end. So, there's a kind of correspondence. Peter and the beloved disciple are quite close. They're paired in the narrative at certain points but at both ends, the beloved disciple claims to have this slight primacy over Peter as a witness. He was there just before Peter. He's still there a little after Peter.

00:09:22 **Shane Rosenthal:** So, you do argue that the Gospel of John was written by a trustworthy eyewitness who had been with Jesus from the beginning, but you also end up arguing that both, according to the internal and external evidence, this author is not actually the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee.

00:09:38 **Richard Bauckham:** Yes, and as you say, there are two distinct lines of discussion here. One concerns the evidence we have from early Christian writers off to the gospels written. The other evidence is from within the gospel itself. In other words, does the gospel itself portray the disciple Jesus loved as well as one of the 12? One, the second point, the internal evidence—I think there are quite a few reasons to think this. The synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, focus on the 12 apostles and they focus, particularly, on this in the circle of the 12—three disciples, Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, who appear with Jesus in scenes like the Transfiguration, where Jesus takes them apart from the others so that there's three of the other witnesses. So, it looks very much as though the story in Mark is based on Peter's memories, which he shared with the other two of his inner circle of three and to a lesser extent, with the 12. John's gospel, actually, hardly mentions the 12, and certainly, disciples that appear in John's gospel were not in the other gospels. There's Nathaniel, for example; there's Nicodemus, there's Lazarus. These are quite important characters in John. We've not heard of them in the other gospels. And also, there are disciples who appear in the other gospels as mere names in the list of the 12, like Philip and Thomas, who become important characters in John's gospel. So, it does look as though the focus in John's gospel is on a different circle of disciples, and one of the key things one has to do if you're looking at all four gospels is to explain why John is different and this, I think, is one of the reasons why John is different. He gives us the memories of Jesus that he himself and others within this particular circle, the disciples that he was close to, such as Nicodemus, such as a Lazarus and so forth. The other big contrast, of course, is that so much of John's gospel happens in Jerusalem—very little in Galilee.

00:11:45 **Shane Rosenthal:** Right. He comes from Galilee to the Jerusalem festivals and it's situated mostly in Jerusalem, whereas in the synoptic gospels, most of the scenes are set in Galilee. Right?

00:11:56 **Richard Bauckham:** Exactly. The beloved disciple is probably a disciple who resided in Jerusalem and didn't travel around with the others most of the time and therefore, in a sense, is a less well-known disciple. So, I think, in a way, the beloved disciple in writing this book of his own witness needs to show his readers as it were his credentials for being a reliable witness to the events of Jesus' story. If you compare the role that the beloved disciple plays in John's gospel, what we know about it, there's very little in

common with the account of John, the son of Zebedee. I mean, just one point that's really worth mentioning, because people don't usually think about this when they think about him as the beloved disciple—in the synoptic gospels, John is always mentioned along with his brother James—James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They're an inseparable pair in the synoptic gospels. In John's gospel, James does not appear at all until in chapter 21. Chapter 21 has a single reference to the sons of Zebedee. They're not named, but the sons of Zebedee are in chapter 21. So, both sons of Zebedee are named there. But if the beloved disciple is John, the son of Zebedee, we would expect his brother, James, to come into the picture from time to time, at least, whereas, he's notably absent from this narrative. So, if people say, "Well, John, the son of Zebedee was an important figure close to Jesus in the synoptics," surely, he must be there in John's gospel, and there's no other character he can be except the beloved disciple. Do we try and count up James, the son of Zebedee, is just as important a character in the synoptics, and he does not appear in the fourth gospel? So, the non-appearance of key people from the synoptic gospels in John's gospel cuts both ways,<sup>0</sup> actually. I don't think you can have it applying to John unless you also face the fact that James is not there.

00:13:54 **Shane Rosenthal:** Now you also talk about John 21. You just mentioned that scene in which there are seven disciples total, five of whom are named to have been being the sons of Zebedee, but then there are two anonymous disciples. You talk about that being a kind of bookend that mirrors the anonymous disciple there at the beginning. Can you talk about that and how you think it points to the fact that the author of this gospel is one of those two anonymous disciples mentioned there?

00:14:17 **Richard Bauckham:** Yes. I mean, if one thinks about the fact that the sons of Zebedee occur there and nowhere else, well, it is going to just mention the sons of Zebedee were more appropriate than on the fishing expedition. So, it's not too surprising that the sons of Zebedee are not in the rest of the gospel, but they do come up there. So, you got seven disciples, the sons of Zebedee, the others who are named, Nathaniel and Philip and so forth, and the two unnamed disciples, so that all scholars who take the view that the beloved disciple is not one of the 12 see that the two anonymous disciples, as it were, cover the appearance of the beloved disciple very soon in that narrative. So, if the beloved disciple is not one of the sons of Zebedee then he's one of the two anonymous disciples. That is pretty obvious. But, of course, that is consistent with his anonymity through the rest of the gospel and it corresponds, as you say, to this original appearance at the beginning as an anonymous character, because he's never named. He's never named. He's only ever called the disciple Jesus loved, and chapter 21 goes on to identify himself that disciple.

00:15:20 **Shane Rosenthal:** Talk to our listeners for a moment about the verbs of *seeing* that we see in the synoptic gospels, in general, and Mark, in particular, in which we see a transition from the male witnesses to female witnesses during Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and resurrection, and why do you think that's significant?

00:15:35 **Richard Bauckham:** Yes. I've argued—I mean, this is something that goes back to what Papias says about Mark's gospel—that it was based on Peter's testimony, that Mark

worked as Peter's interpreter, translator presumably, and wrote down the stories about Jesus and the same as Jesus as he heard them from Peter. And Peter is the most prominent character in the gospel after Jesus. He's mentioned more often than anyone else. And Peter is present at almost everything that happens until, of course, the famous event in which he denied Jesus three times and disappears from the narrative at that point. So, Peter and, in fact, none of the other male disciples, none of the members of 12, they all flee in Gethsemane. None of them are present from that bit of the narrative onward and, of course, what happens after that are some of the really, really important events in Mark's story that Jesus, Jesus' burial, the discovery of his empty tomb—and if Mark cares about his eyewitness sources, it would be rather remarkable if he has no eyewitness sources for those concluding events in the story, and therefore, it's very interesting that women disciples of Jesus, who Mark actually is not referred to earlier in the gospel at all—Luke does, but Mark has nothing about them until he gets to this point in the story. And then, he tells us that a group of women disciples were present with Jesus when he was dying on the cross, and he names three of those women, and he says they were observing what went on when Jesus died and then he tells us that two of them were present, observing what was going on when Jesus is buried in the tomb. And then, he has all three of those named women appearing again in his last story, really where they find the empty tomb, he heard the message of the angel that he has risen. Now, if you look at what he says about these women, carefully distinguished by name, almost everything he says about them, he says in verbs of see. They see him. They look and they notice, and they observe.

00:17:35 **Shane Rosenthal:** And they behold.

00:17:36 **Richard Bauckham:** They behold a whole series of Greek words for seeing. So really, it's quite clear that the important thing about these women is that they see what goes on. They see Jesus die. They see where he's buried. They see that the tomb is empty. So, I think it's actually, really, rather clear that these women, as they were stepping into the role that Peter had played in Mark's narrative up to that point—they are the witnesses for this latter part of the story.

00:18:02 **Shane Rosenthal:** And isn't that the significant argument for the fact that the beloved disciple would not be John the Apostle, for if the Apostle John was the man who's there reported in the fourth gospel as the one who is standing next to Jesus on the cross whom Jesus gives the custody of his mother, why wouldn't Mark have brought forth the testimony of that authoritative apostle at this crucial point in the narrative rather than relying on the testimony of these women whom he's only now introduced?

00:18:30 **Richard Bauckham:** Yes. I think that's a good point and, of course, Mark tells us that all 12 of the 12 apostles deserted Jesus in Gethsemane. Then we find that Peter, to his credit, does stick with Jesus a little bit further. There's no indication of any other—of the 12 reappear in the story. So, if you're reading Mark, the obvious conclusion is that John, the son of Zebedee, like all the others, is no longer with Jesus when he dies.

00:18:56 **Shane Rosenthal:** So now, we've talked for a little bit about internal evidence for the authorship of John's gospel. What can we learn from the external evidence?

00:19:03 **Richard Bauckham:** The external evidence: we have a number of references in the second century up to Irenaeus, really, at the end of the second century, which people have generally taken to refer to the John who wrote the gospel—but they assumed that that John is meant to be John, son of Zebedee. Now, the earliest evidence we have about the gospels is that of Papias and we only have fragments of his work, but Papias is talking about how he, himself, had been collecting gospel traditions in the late first century. So, you would ask about what Andrew had said and what John had said, and then he said—he would also ask about what John the Elder and Aristion, disciples of Jesus, were saying, as a clear contrast between what the first group of disciples with Jesus had been saying—presumably, they're now dead, and what these other two disciples of Jesus were saying at the time when Papias was inquiring, which is probably around the years 80 to 90, that sort of period in the late first century. So, we have another disciple called John and he added that title—John the Elder—is interesting. It's, actually, a literal elder, the old one. And if you look at the second and the third epistles of John in the New Testament, the author calls himself the elder, the old one. So, he only had to call himself the old one and people would know who he was.

00:20:34 **Shane Rosenthal:** Richard Bauckham, Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies at the University of Saint Andrews, Scotland, and Senior Scholar at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Throughout this year, we spoke with a number of scholars who take the more traditional view that the fourth gospel was written by the Apostle John. And so, I asked them a number of questions related to the authorship issue, in general, as well as what they thought of Richard Bauckham's view, in particular. The first scholar you will hear from is D. A. Carson and I asked him why he thought it was that the Apostle John referred to himself using this strange language of “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

00:21:07 **D. A. Carson:** Let me argue a bit tangentially. There are some people, some pastors, some Christian leaders who think soon, when you get to know them, you come away thinking that you're particularly loved by them. A good pastor does that in part by giving all of his attention to whatever person he is talking to. So, when John, whoever is writing, when John speaks of “the one whom Jesus loves,” I don't think he's saying I'm loved more than you are or something like that. I don't think it's competitive document. In John 11, Mary and Martha referred to Lazarus, their brother, as the one whom he loved and that has actually made some people wonder if Lazarus wrote the book. But I think that doesn't make any sense either. There's just too much patristic and other evidence against it—no hint that he was present at the Last Supper. I think that it's a way of saying Jesus so loved people that they felt peculiarly loved by him, and here is John, who is once the son of thunder who sees himself now as “the one whom Jesus loves.” You have to remember that his first readers would know who he was talking about. It's not the literary strategy of somebody writing a book that's being thrown out of the open marketplace. I mean, everybody who read him in the first instance would have known whom he was talking about. I think that Bauckham is right when says that the four gospels were meant to circulate widely and not just into little narrow communities. I think that's correct. The gospels for all believers, for all Christians.

00:22:38 **Andreas Kostenberger:** None of the gospels explicitly identify their author.

00:22:42 **Shane Rosenthal:** Andreas Kostenberger, Research Professor of New Testament at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

00:22:48 **Andreas Kostenberger:** In that sense, gospels are different from epistles, where the author identifies himself right at the outset. And so, this is not innate to John's gospel. I think the reason why John would not identify himself more directly in part has to do with duplication of names in the gospel. He likes to—when you have multiple figures in the narrative with the same name, he likes to reserve that name for one of those characters, and then refer to another character by the same name in different ways. You see that, for instance, with Mary, Jesus' mother. Of course, everybody knew her name was Mary. Again, it's one of those things that John likely assumed as just people's general knowledge of the Christian story, but in John 2, for example, the wedding at Cana, Mary is never referred to as Mary. She is just called the mother of Jesus. Why? I think it's to eliminate any possible confusion about which Mary are we talking about here. So, in John, Mary is Mary Magdalene.

00:23:53 **Shane Rosenthal:** And John is John the Baptist?

00:23:55 **Andreas Kostenberger:** Correct. You see in the prologue in John 1:6, *“And there was a man, his name was John. He was sent from God.”* And so, right at the beginning then, that name is essentially claimed. And so, then I think John is identifying himself more obliquely as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” but to me, I think there's probably more weighty reasons why Bauckham rejects apostolic authorship that probably have more to do with, maybe, hesitation to go with the more traditional view. I'm not saying we should blindly follow tradition. I think, in this case, I would say there is a good reason why the tradition holds that the Apostle John wrote the gospel. I know that John 21:2, where he talks about the sons of Zebedee as part of that group of seven who go fishing seems to speak against that, but I think when you look at it more broadly in the big picture, it's a fairly minor piece of evidence that can easily be explained by this common feature of authors occasionally referring to themselves in the third person.

00:25:01 **Shane Rosenthal:** Do you think that there is some extra-biblical record about there being two Johns in Ephesus?

00:25:06 **Andreas Kostenberger:** Actually, I have written an entire article with a former student of mine, Steven Stout, on that exact issue engaging Bauckham and his reading of the patristic evidence. Of course, he started out as a patristic scholar, so I certainly, generally, have great respect for his expertise in that area. If I were starting out with skepticism toward apostolic authorship, I would probably go to John the Elder, too, because that's just about the only possible piece of evidence for a John other than John the Apostle, but I think when you look at the referencing question to John the Elder, there's many caution flags going up that we should not be too quick to assume that it's even such a person as John the Elder. Remember that John refers to himself as the elder in two of the epistles, and so, I



think it's very likely that that particular church father might have separated those two figures, when in fact, John the Apostle and John the Elder were one and the same person.

00:26:06 **Lydia McGrew:** That roundabout phrase, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” I think that could be a question for everybody.

00:26:12 **Shane Rosenthal:** Lydia McGrew, author of *Hidden in Plain View: Undesigned Coincidences in the Gospels and Acts*.

00:26:18 **Lydia McGrew:** I would agree with Richard Baukham's general take that that phrase was the person's roundabout way of emphasizing his own role as the witness and recorder—that he is this person, was especially close, and so, he has this role as witness. It's just kind of a conspicuous, stylized reference to himself and to his own self-concept, and one could argue that he's made this decision to not name himself, and therefore, he can't name his brother either because it would be awkward, because they're generally named together and so forth. So, I'm not necessarily leaning heavily on that. I'm just pointing out that the lack of the name could be used, I would say, more plausibly to argue that he is the son of Zebedee than to argue that he is not the son of Zebedee.

00:27:02 **Shane Rosenthal:** Dr. McGrew, in light of your view that this language of “the disciple whom Jesus loved” is a kind of stylized way for the author to refer to himself—why do you think it is that he nowhere, explicitly connects this language to the person of John, the son of Zebedee?

00:27:15 **Lydia McGrew:** Well, I think we find that pretty frequently with ancient authors, generally. Matthew refers to himself in the third person all the time and doesn't say, by the way, “I'm Matthew.” Luke, in Acts, never says, by the way, “I'm Luke, the beloved physician.”

00:27:32 **Shane Rosenthal:** How do you respond to Bauckham when he argues from the external evidence that there were actually two disciples of Jesus named John?

00:27:38 **Lydia McGrew:** Papias is the only source for there being two Johns in Ephesus, and that's also a disputed interpretation of Papias, too.

00:27:46 **Shane Rosenthal:** But Papias, specifically, recalled hearing what John the Apostle had said, as well, as to what other disciples of Jesus such as John the Elder were saying—and this is the earliest external reference we have.

00:27:55 **Lydia McGrew:** It could be a different person. If it is, I don't think we have any reason to believe he's the author of the gospel. Like you've got this possible reading that there's two different Johns, and then Bauckham kind of takes off with it from there to where, okay, maybe this other John is the author of the gospel. That's the part where I think it's incorrect.

00:28:17 **Shane Rosenthal:** What do you think about the arguments Bauckham makes concerning the second century bishop, Polycrates, who seemed to think that the beloved disciple was one who had officiated as high priest, and therefore, who was not likely to be John the son of Zebedee?

00:28:30 **Lydia McGrew:** That Polycrates argument is extremely weak. Polycrates says that the John who leaned on Jesus' breast was one who wore the priestly mitre. Now he does not contrast that with the son of Zebedee. Bauckham conjectures how Polycrates got confused about this, because he thinks he's wrong that he wore the priestly mitre. And so, he says, "How did he get confused? Oh, maybe in Acts 4, he accidentally identified him with the John who was with the priests in Acts 4?" Now this would be a horrible mistake. And then, Bauckham says, "Well he wouldn't have made this mistake if he didn't know that he wasn't the son of Zebedee, because there he is in the same scene with the son of Zebedee, so because I think that's the mistake he made, I think he knew he wasn't the son of Zebedee." So, that's the argument, and it's a terrible argument. So, Polycrates doesn't, in fact, distinguish him from the son of Zebedee. That is a highly dubious conjecture.

00:28:49 **Shane Rosenthal:** After further correspondence, Dr. McGrew later clarified that though she didn't think that Polycrates was mistaken, she was more inclined to believe that his reference to John wearing the high priestly head plate was a kind of metaphor that was not to be taken literally. But what if we didn't dismiss the words of Polycrates as either a mistake on the one hand, or as some kind of metaphor on the other? What if this second century father really did have accurate information about the author of the Fourth Gospel? Since he served as a bishop in Ephesus where John had also resided, it seems plausible to suggest that he would have been in touch with the most reliable information. And so, if his statement is to be taken literally, it would be difficult to argue that John, the son of Zebedee, is the beloved disciple, for how could a fisherman from Galilee be able to serve as a high priest? Now, with Richard Bauckham, I also grant that it's difficult to imagine any of Jesus' disciples serving as a high priest at the Jerusalem Temple, but according to the Talmud, members of the high priestly family were always on hand and ready to serve as a substitute for the high priest during the sacred festivals in case of a sudden illness or some form of impurity. So, what if one of the lesser known chief priests, who served in this capacity, later on ended up becoming a disciple of Jesus? In my thinking, this is not only plausible, but actually makes sense of some of the language we find in John chapter 18.

00:29:28 Dr. Carson, do you think a reasonable case can be made that the fourth gospel was written by this lesser known character named John the Elder?

00:29:28 **D. A. Carson:** Well, clearly a reasonable case. Richard Bauckham is a reasonable man and he makes out exactly that case. I'm still surprised that he's done it. He gives all the reasons why John has to be an eyewitness and so on, and then he appeals to this character called John the Elder. I think a pretty good case can be made. The references to John the Elder are actually a reference to the Apostle John, who calls himself an elder as Peter calls himself an elder in his epistles. The reasons for appealing to John the Elder as a separate individual, in my view, are pretty weak. But Richard Bauckham has made a good a case as you can get, and if somebody wants to go that route, that's fine. One small point.

It's clear that the beloved disciple whom Richard takes to be in reference to this elder was present at the Lord's Supper. So, he must say that present at the Lord's Supper were not only the twelve, but also this extra chap. The synoptics make it pretty clear that the people who present at the Lord's Supper were Jesus and the twelve, that there was nobody else.

00:30:36 **Shane Rosenthal:** But does it really say that there was no one else? Because Bauckham responds to the subjection by asking how many angels were at the tomb? The standard way of resolving differences in the Resurrection narratives is to say that just because one of the gospels says that an angel was present doesn't mean that there was only one angel. And so, while it's true that the synoptic gospels say that Jesus was feasting with the twelve, none of them end up saying he feasted *only* with the twelve.

00:30:57 **D. A. Carson:** I would say, at the level of mere logic, that's correct. But on the other hand, you can show that Matthew's gospel, as compared with Mark, regularly has multiple sub-people. He's interested in the fuller picture and so provides, too, where Mark has one. So, there's a pattern of that going on, but all the sources that we have of the Last Supper, there is no hint of anyone present beyond the Twelve. There's no passage that says—and, of course, there was nobody else present. If you look at something as exclusive as that, then Richard is right. There is no text that is exclusionary. But on the other hand, I think that it's extraordinary that you'd have to argue for the presence of somebody, also, by the name of John who is not mentioned in any of the accounts—whose very existence as somebody independent of John the Apostle is at least disputable on some tactical grounds connected with the Papias document. It is so tenuous. I really don't see why such a fine scholar as Richard goes down that route.

00:32:02 **Shane Rosenthal:** Dr. Carson, what's your view of the unnamed disciple who appears in John 18, who follows Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest and then, who later speaks to the servant girl and grants Peter access? Do you think this character is also the beloved disciple and thus the author of this gospel?

00:32:17 **D. A. Carson:** Probably, but not certainly. I think it's the simplest exclusion. I think that the ones John has adopted, the strategy of not naming himself but referring to him obliquely and commonly as “the one whom Jesus loved,” I think that that makes sense.

00:32:32 **Shane Rosenthal:** Now, since in your view, this would be John, the son of Zebedee, how do you account for the fact that according to verse 15 of John 18, that he was known to the high priest?

00:32:41 **D. A. Carson:** The Galilee fishing business provided food for the capital, and it may well be that John was one of those who had access to the courts of Jerusalem, precisely because he acted in part for the family and sales, and so on. I can't prove any of that but it's a more reasonable speculation to the speculation as to invent another unknown party.

00:33:06 **Shane Rosenthal:** But why did the high priests' fish salesmen have the authority to grant Peter access into the court?

00:33:11 **D. A. Carson:** Well, it is not established that the figure has the authority to let Peter in, but that he is known, and therefore, Peter is let in.

00:33:19 **Shane Rosenthal:** But the text says he went to speak to the servant girl at the gate and she let Peter in.

00:33:22 **D. A. Carson:** Of course, but that doesn't mean he went to the servant girl and said, "Hey, I'm part of the priestly family here. I command you to let him in." It sounds much more like, "Hhey, you know me. Can my friend come in here please?"

00:33:35 **Shane Rosenthal:** Dr. Blomberg, what's your view of the unnamed disciple of John 18 who's known to the high priest and who also seems to have the authority to grant Peter access into the courtyard? Do you believe that this is beloved disciple?

00:33:47 **Craig Blomberg:** It certainly could be. You've got five places in the latter chapters of John where you have this strictly anonymous person called "the disciple Jesus loved" that the church has associated with the Apostle John since early days. But you also have a handful of other places where you just have an anonymous disciple, or you might expect a name to appear but you don't, and if John the Apostle as the writer, he's being consistent and not referring to himself by name, he may be that person that you alluded to in chapter 18. It's interesting. We tend to have a, sort of, romantic notion perhaps of Galilee, and it's a backwater place with rude, unlettered fishermen and farmers, and the ancient reality was much more complex than that, especially in Tiberias, especially in Sepphoris. You had very urbanized cities. There was a thriving fish industry going up and down the Jordan River. The best fish were consistently said to come from Galilee. Jerusalem is landlocked. It's almost as close to the Dead Sea as it is to the Jordan River, and somebody had to provide the elders, and Sadducees, and the high priests and governors with food and the food, for the most part, came from Galilee. Citrus fruit came from the plains of Sharon along the Mediterranean Sea. It's complete speculation but it's not recent speculation. It was John's family, one of the suppliers of fish to the high priest's home. Is that how he knew them? It's not beyond the bounds of possibility.

00:35:39 **Andreas Kostenberger:** All that is claimed there is that the high priest apparently knew who John was.

00:35:44 **Shane Rosenthal:** Andreas Kostenberger.

00:35:45 **Andreas Kostenberger:** And so, that enabled him to gain Peter access. This is part of the consistent portrayal of the author, which I believe to be John the Apostle having superior access, superior even to the Apostle Peter. And so, you see consistently that's in the Upper Room. Peter is turning to the beloved disciple to find out the identity of the betrayer, or later on, the empty tomb. John outruns Peter and gets to the tomb first—or even more, maybe prominently in chapter 21, it's John who recognizes Jesus and says, "It's the Lord," and then Peter jumps into the lake. And so, I think there's this consistent holy one-up-man-ship, you might say, where John tries to boost his credentials as a witness, if you will, and shows that in some ways he was even closer to the source than Peter. And so,

if you place that reference in John 18 within that larger picture, that again, Peter can't get even into the high priest courtyard without John's help.

00:36:52 **Shane Rosenthal:** But how do you think John, the son of Zebedee, would have been known to the high priest?

00:36:55 **Andreas Kostenberger:** We just have to consider the possibility that John had a personal acquaintance. His father had a fishing business with several employees and so forth, which we need to realize that in Galilee, fishing was one of the major industries. So, this is not just some marginal business he was engaged in.

00:37:15 **Lydia McGrew:** It says explicitly that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was standing at the foot of the cross. So, there's no reason to introduce a different anonymous person who is sort of following through Jesus' passion in chapter 18. So, to take the phrase the other disciple in chapter 18 to be that same person as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” at the foot of the cross in chapter 19 is a very reasonable, simplifying assumption—that this was a disciple of Jesus who was remaining close to him through his passion.

00:37:46 **Shane Rosenthal:** Yeah, and then there's also John 20, where it says “the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved”...

00:37:50 **Lydia McGrew:** Exactly. Sometimes those phrases are, actually, even brought together.

00:37:53 **Shane Rosenthal:** Yeah, yeah. Now Dr. McGrew, you argued on a previous episode that the Zebedee family may have supplied fish to the high priest, and that this might be the explanation for how the beloved disciple was “known to the high priest,” which we find out about in John 18:15. But if that's really the case, then why do you think the chief priests ended up allowing this fish salesman into his courts during this late night trial, which they're trying to keep out of the public eye?

00:38:19 **Lydia McGrew:** I think we have an anachronistic idea of this courtyard as a sort of exclusive place. We, modern Americans, are not used to big households with courtyards and especially as an influential person, and with lots of people kneeling around who aren't members of the family. But that's, actually, the picture we see in all four of the gospels. It's a very crowded place. So, I don't think the high priest is there giving orders, hardly letting anybody in—“Be really careful, we're trying to keep this quiet.” That's not the picture I get from any of the four gospels.

00:38:48 **Shane Rosenthal:** Another question we could ask here is, “How do we explain the fact that the high priest's fish salesman has the ability himself to grant someone like Peter entrance into the courtyard?” So, guests typically don't have that kind of ability, but only residents, and this may be amplified by the fact that we're dealing with this late-night trial that they're trying to keep out of the books. What do you think?

00:39:08 **Lydia McGrew:** Well, I don't know of any independent evidence that only a resident would generally have the social ability to get the servant girl to let someone in. I think that's just a supposition. It's really who you know. So, she sees him and out. She thinks well of him and he's probably pretty young, by the way. I think he was maybe the youngest of the disciples since he lived to quite an old age. So, you could think of him as the kid who delivers the fish, the kid—maybe I'm being a little exaggerated but, you know, he's in his late teens or something like that. She lets him in then he can say, "Oh, this guy is fine. He's a friend of mine. Let him in." Again, it's a society where influence is what matters.

00:39:49 **Shane Rosenthal:** Now, Dr. McGrew, you've pointed out that some of my statements are conjectures or suppositions, but do you think that this same pushback could be applied to the claim that John was someone who sold fish to the high priest?

00:40:00 **Lydia McGrew:** Oh, that's a conjecture. Of course, it's a conjecture! We don't know how he was known to the high priest, but at least I don't have a whole chain of conjectures. This is just one conjecture to account for this one statement that he was known to the high priest. How might he have been known? I mean, I could make other conjectures, too. That's just one.

00:40:16 **Shane Rosenthal:** Okay. So now, once he grants access to Peter there in the courtyard of the high priest, where do you think the beloved disciple goes from there?

00:40:22 **Lydia McGrew:** Looks like he follows Jesus to the cross. I mean, I think we're agreed on that because that's what we find in John 19.

00:40:28 **Shane Rosenthal:** But before he gets to the cross, I guess my question to you would be whether you would see the beloved disciple as the primary witness to the trial that's going on here, as well to the conversation that happens later on with Pilate.

00:40:39 **Lydia McGrew:** I think he was probably one of the witnesses with Pilate. He may have been one of the witnesses here. I do think we have reason to think that there were multiple witnesses, one of them might have been someone who converted from the priestly class. We know in Acts that they were members of the priestly class who converted.

00:40:54 **Shane Rosenthal:** Okay. So, at this point, I've got a couple of questions. First, if this is one of the witnesses to Jesus' interrogation before the chief priests or Pilate, why would a teenage fish salesman be allowed into proceedings like that? And then secondly, why are the other gospels completely silent about the Apostle John's presence from this point here, you know, in the courtyard of the high priest, all the way to the time in which he's given the custody of Jesus' mother, Mary, there at the foot of the cross?

00:41:17 **Lydia McGrew:** Okay. So, we've got several different questions here. So, let's start with he was in the inner trial. He was there. He was a witness of it. That is an inference. We don't know that. Maybe yes, maybe no. Maybe he stepped in the back of the room for a minute and stepped back out. Number 2, if he was there, then he had to be someone more important. He had to be someone closer to the high priest. And at this

point, you're multiplying your improbabilities. So, I'm not going to hold myself responsible to answer a question, "Hey, why was he definitely allowed into this trial if they didn't know him really well?" There's all kinds of suppositions going on there, but then the absence of his being named in the synoptic narratives as being, for example, near the cross, receiving custody of Mary—well, let's note the synoptics don't even say that anybody got custody of Mary. In fact, they don't even mention Mary near the foot of the cross. So, why didn't they mention Mary? Now, as far as why they didn't mention him as a witness, I believe that Bauckham and those who argue from that has the exact same problem themselves—if he was this person who was important to the early church, if he was "the disciple Jesus loved," he was in that sense an important witness. I think the very same question arises, "Why don't they mention this disciple at the foot of the cross in the synoptics?" Well, people just don't mention things sometimes.

00:42:40 **Shane Rosenthal:** As you can see throughout these conversations, I ended up spending a lot of time inquiring about the identity of this other disciple who is known to the high priest there in John 18. With most of these scholars, I'm convinced that this character is none other than the beloved disciple. But I find it difficult to believe that the person described here could actually be John, the son of Zebedee. Would a fisherman from Galilee really be the one to provide fish for the high priest in Jerusalem? And even if this was the case, why would a fish merchant be allowed to enter into this gated courtyard with Jesus during this late-night trial? If he's the witness who provided the details of Jesus' trials, why would such a man even be allowed to enter these proceedings? And if John was the only apostle to follow Jesus all the way to the cross, why was this fact not even hinted at in the other gospels? Commenting on this fact, Richard Bauckham writes, "The point is not just that Mark fails to mention John's presence at the cross, but that he doesn't introduce him as an eyewitness. Why should Mark resort to the women for testimony if one of the Twelve could have supplied it?" I think Bauckham's point here is worth considering, especially given the importance that the beloved disciple himself places on his own eyewitness testimony within his narrative. Now, Lydia McGrew argued that the silence of the other gospels actually cuts both ways, for even if this is not the Apostle John, if this is the beloved disciple who had been a witness from the beginning and he was also there at the foot of the cross, shouldn't we expect his testimony to appear in the synoptic gospels, as well? I think this is a good question, but I think it's also one that can be answered. If we take literally the statement from Polycrates that the beloved disciple was actually a member of the high priestly family, then clearly he would have had the ability to walk into the courtyard of the high priest unafraid and would have had the authority to grant Peter access, as well. He also would have had sufficient authority to stay with Jesus during his interrogations and trials, and he also would have had the means to provide care and safe harbor for Jesus' mother, Mary. John the Apostle was told that as one of the Twelve, he would face floggings, beatings, expulsions and other forms of persecution as they went from town to town proclaiming the gospel. So, is this one to whom Jesus entrusted the care of his mother in his last moments? Is John to be an evangelist or a stay at home caregiver? If we are to suggest that, perhaps, Mary was to travel with John, wouldn't that imply that she was being placed in harm's way? But if the beloved disciple is actually one of the chief priests, he likely would have had a large, spacious residence there in Jerusalem along with servants who also could provide care for Mary. The fact that Jesus gave the beloved disciple the

custody of his mother is, I think, the key to this whole mystery, for if this disciple was actually a chief priest, then he probably had a motive to keep his own identity off the record. I agree that most people in the early Christian community likely knew who this John was, but the more I study the particular words used throughout this narrative, the more I've come to the conclusion that the beloved disciple was using "protective anonymity," and not primarily for himself, but in order to protect Jesus' mother, Mary. John's own close family members may have known the details of his arrangement with Jesus but if this fact was published in a document that was circulating widely, then it seems that sufficient pressure could have been placed on this disciple's family, to the end that he can be disinherited and his property confiscated. In such a case, the beloved disciple would no longer be able to give Mary the care and protection that she required. This idea of protective anonymity, therefore, is for me the best explanation of both why John's name is not mentioned in the fourth gospel and why the beloved disciple does not appear as a character in the other gospels, as well. Now, I also asked Richard Bauckham about his view of John 18, and surprisingly, he was still on the fence as to whether this other disciple mentioned there was actually to be identified as the beloved disciple.

00:46:09 **Richard Bauckham:** I'm not sure about that. I really am undecided. I think there's things to be said on either side of that. It does—I mean, I do take the view the beloved disciple is a Jerusalem disciple, maybe quite a high statured person, because he seems to be on good terms with people like Lazarus and Nicodemus, who are kind of among the more aristocratic end of Jerusalem's society. So, there's some indications that he might be the sort of person who would be known to the high priest and fulfill that role, therefore, in chapter 18. Against it is merely the fact that he's not identified, whereas the other occasions before and after that, he's called "the disciple Jesus loved." So, I'm not sure. I'm rather tempted by this argument, however. John's gospel is fond of sevens. A lot of things happen in sevens in the gospel. There are seven signs. There are seven "I Am" sayings, and so forth, and if you include chapter 18, the beloved disciple appears seven times in the gospel. So, I'm quite attracted by the idea that he's deliberately named himself seven times—and seven was the number of completeness, but it also functioned in the sense that if you had seven of something, they could stand representatively for all of that something. So, John is quite clear that he doesn't narrate all the signs that Jesus did, but he narrates seven as kind of representative of them. So, if he has himself as the beloved disciple, appearing seven times in the narrative, those can kind of represent all the occasions when he's there, but he doesn't explicitly mention the fact.

00:47:58 **Shane Rosenthal:** What's your view of the hypothesis that says John, the son of Zebedee, may have been known to the high priest because he was a fisherman who may have sold fish to the high priestly family?

00:48:07 **Richard Bauckham:** It's not only a weak hypothesis, but it's nonsense. The Zebedee family would have sold their fish to the local market in Galilee. It's inconceivable that their fish would have gone to the high priest. The fish trade didn't happen like that and my recently published book on Magdala of Galilee dominating the fishing industry, and there's no way a Capernaum fisherman would have supplied the high priest. It makes no sense in the economy of the fish trade in that time.



00:48:37 **Shane Rosenthal:** Well, we hope that you've enjoyed this discussion of the identity of the beloved disciple. As we've seen throughout this program, there are different sides to this important debate, and we hope that hearing the arguments from the scholars who've appeared on this episode has been helpful. And whatever side you come down on, more than anything I hope this program helps you to see that the beloved disciple was a real person who really was an eyewitness to all that Jesus said and did. And so, if this gospel is indeed real history, and not some kind of later fan fiction, then perhaps we shouldn't be afraid to ask tough questions of this text, such as the kind we've been exploring on this program. Folks, as always, be sure to visit our website for more information or to find out how to support our work. Our address is [www.whitehorseinn.org](http://www.whitehorseinn.org), that's [www.whitehorseinn.org](http://www.whitehorseinn.org), and we look forward to being with you again next time on the White Horse Inn as we continue to summarize many of the themes that we've explored throughout our year-long study of the Gospel of John. Thanks for being with us.

00:49:21 **Narrator:** The White Horse Inn is a listener supported broadcast. For more information about this program, visit us online at [www.whitehorseinn.org](http://www.whitehorseinn.org). If you sign up as an Innkeeper, Architect or Reformer, not only will you get a complimentary subscription to our magazine Modern Reformation, but you'll also get longer editions of every White Horse Inn broadcast. To find out how to join one of these support programs, click on the support tab of our website, [www.whitehorseinn.org](http://www.whitehorseinn.org). You can also give us a call at 1-800-890-7556. That's 1-800-890-7556. We'll see you next time at The White Horse Inn.